

National Wildlife Services Advisory Committee Meeting

Riverdale Conference Center

Riverdale, MD

June 4-5, 2002

Tuesday, June 4, 2002

Committee Members in Attendance:

Clait Braun, Grouse, Inc. (Chairman)
John Baucus, Sieban Ranch Company (Vice Chairman)
Jeffrey Andrews
Jeff Baxter, Baxter Land Company
Regan Beck, Rancher
Gerald Chacon, New Mexico State University
Eugene Chafe, Senske Pest Control Company
John Hadidian, Urban Wildlife Program of the HSUS
Joe Harper, Sheep Producer
Caroline Kennedy, Defenders of Wildlife
Cathy Liss, Animal Welfare Institute
Terry Mansfield, California Department of Fish and Game, OSPR
Debra Miller, Veterinary Diagnostic and Investigational Lab
Rochelle Oxarango, Oxarango Lamb and Wool
Deloyd Satterthwaite, Ellison Ranching Company
Mark Zaunbrecher, Sweet Lake Land and Oil Company, Inc

Committee Members Not in Attendance:

Scott Nelson, Farmer
Michael D. Fox, Native American Fish and Wildlife Service
Donald Lein, Cornell University
H. Austin Jones, Bear Creek Fisheries, Inc.

Welcome and Introductions

The National Wildlife Services Advisory Committee (NWSAC) met in the Riverdale Conference Center in Riverdale, MD. The meeting was called to orders at 8:10 a.m., on Tuesday, June 4, 2002.

Bill Clay, Deputy Administrator, WS, welcomed the group, introducing Bobby Acord, Deputy of APHIS, to the Committee and the WSMT. Bill thanked Joanne Garrett and Alton Dunaway for a great job of organizing previous evenings Social at the Greenbelt Marriot in Greenbelt, MD.

Each Committee member introduced themselves and their interest, after which, a presentation of awards and photo ops with William “Bill” Hawks, Undersecretary for Marketing and Regulatory Programs, and Bobby Acord took place for the following committee members:

John Baucus
Jeff Andrews
Jeff Baxter
Regan Beck
Clait Braun
Gerald Chacon
Eugene Chafe
John Hadidian
Joe Harper
Caroline Kennedy
Cathy Liss
Terry Mansfield
Debra Miller
Rochelle Oxarango
Deloyd Satterthwaite
Mark Zaunbrecher
Michael Fox (Absent)

Following the presentation, Bill Clay gave an overview of the two day agenda and formally introduced Bill Hawks. Bill Hawks briefly touched on the subject of reimbursements of travel and he expressed his appreciation to the committee on their attendance. Mr. Hawks also expressed the economic importance of Wildlife Services (WS) and its losses. Due to the dedication and diligence of the committee, Mr. Hawks declared that WS has changed over the years and that any recommendations that the committee brings forth, would be taken very seriously and handled at the Deputy and Undersecretary’s level. He urged the committee to “work together” and to present sound recommendations.

After the Undersecretary’s speech, Bill Clay once again and formally, introduced Bobby Acord. Bobby Acord appreciated the introduction and let the committee know that his mission is to let managers do their jobs and that he was not there to be a program manager. Mr. Acord has been involved in all NWSAC one way or another. He has worked in APHIS for over 30 years and he expressed his appreciation to staff for their dedication to their jobs. He cited the example of public health and safety, and work that was performed at the World Trade Center in New York, and how WS responded to and continues to respond to these issues. Mr. Acord acknowledged Bill Clay and his staff for the terrific job in keeping WS going successfully. Mr. Acord also touched on the importance to keep focus and support on research. He is privileged to watch the evolution of the committee. The committee has gone through an evolving process since its first meeting. He reminded the committee that their mission is to stay focused and present reasonable recommendation. Bobby Acord and Bill Hawks again thanked the committee for the opportunity to be here today. Bill Clay thanked Bill Hawks and Bobby Acord for their support and attendance.

Review and Update of Last NWSAC Meeting Recommendations

Bill introduced Cindy Smith to the committee who gave a progress report of last year's recommendations and how WS has progressed in working on these recommendations. (Attachment A: June 13-15, 2000 Summary/Decision Document)

WS Regional Updates

Mike Worthen, Western Regional Director, gave an overview and history of the Western Region (WR). He stated that the WR takes in everything. There are 19 western States and 16 State Directors. The history of the WR dates back to 1900 when it was conceived to tackle rodent control. Congress passed the Act of 1931 (Animal Damage Control Act). Back then, ninety percent (90%) of its work was for the protection of livestock. Today that figure is approximately sixty percent (60%) towards agriculture work and the remaining is for other actions.

The past 20 years, WS has received very little appropriations for WS. Livestock protection's major issues have included drought and predation. Its wolverine program has an access of 350 animals, with delisting occurring next winter. The WR works closely with Fish and Wildlife Services (FSW) with funding being provided by FWS for wolves.

Projects that the WR is working to improve on:

Aerial hunting program: The program is currently under review due to a past accident, (a case of WS doing too much with too little dollars). Congress has appropriated dollars to take care of the recommendations for review. The safety program is being conducted and implemented. WS has since hired an airport safety person.

Wildlife protection: WS has received numerous requests from other States for wildlife and endangered species protection in their area. Hawaii being the State with the most endangered species.

Disease control: Rabies protection is an increasing problem. WS is continually assisting States with West Nile virus and the monitoring and surveying of its bird populations.

Swine TB-Texas was provided with money by the CDC to provide assistance in monitoring this disease.

Foot and Mouth Disease: Several States have requested WR to be on their task force in case of emergency or serious outbreak.

Airport Safety: Bird strikes. WR is surveying bird activity at airports and developing and making recommendations for activities.

Brown Tree Snake (Guam): An aggressive snake towards birds, it has brought some species of birds to extinction. The idea is to keep snake restricted to the islands. Dogs

(Jack Russell Terriers) are used to detect the snake.

North and South Dakota: Blackbird control of sunflowers. The environmental impact statement is to be completed this fall. NEPA requests for analysis of projects are in the process of being updated (5 years).

After Mike Worthen's Western Regional overview, Cathy Timms and Candy Anderson, the Travel Coordinators for WS, gave a briefing to the committee members on how to fill out their travel vouchers for reimbursement. Committee members were asked to fill them out and sign in blue ink and mail back to either her or Candy.

Continuation of Regional Updates:

Rick Owens, the Assistant Regional Director (ARD) for the Eastern Region (ER) gave an overhead presentation. His topics consisted of the following:

Wildlife Damage: The ER consists of 31 States and 23 State programs consisting of field leaders, biologist technicians, assistants, and budget assistants.

Some programs combine and involve more than one State. There are currently 414 personnel; 101 biologists; 260 bio-techs; 260-180 full-time staff. Though not required to have a HS degree, some 125 have bio-degrees/masters.

Assessments:

Hazards at airports as it relates to aircraft safety. To properly assess airport/aircraft hazards, management recommendations are made. Questions such as "how long has damage occurred, weather conditions, species of wildlife, etc..." are asked and then ER collaborates with research personnel in developing methods. They evaluate approaches and strategies and how these effective tools are to be used. Working with customers is important in addressing wildlife damage. Field tests are done to assess techniques; example, using grid wires for geese and they fine-tune their methods to make it better.

Various methods of communication are utilization of phone technician assistants; on-site assistants; providing workshops in the field; teaching college courses in wildlife damage; and providing lectures at various colleges.

The ER has participated in several projects dealing with health and safety of wildlife and humans. Their continuous work at the airports keeps the airspace and landing gear free of birds and wildlife. ER participated in the landfill project in New York where the World Trade Centers once stood. Their activity there ensured that the thousands of birds who migrated there were kept at bay (from removing debris), while safety, public health officials, and law enforcement members could do their job of recovering evidence and other debris for specific purposes.

ER's also participates in the damage management of: beavers, which cause property destruction to horticulture; bear and home owner protection; damage to agriculture;

beehives; Canadian geese and property damage; trapped and relocated geese; woodpecker damage; blackbird damage to crops; fish-eating damage to aquaculture (increased issue of concern); and livestock protection (minimal - as compared to WR) to name a few. ER is also actively involved in disease management, such as: West Nile virus, Bovine TB, and Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD). ER continues to work with State and Federal vaccines for oral rabies.

Some limiting factors that ER is faced with are:

- 1) Regional Director - lack of continuity, and representation
- 2) Cooperative needs - vs. Government
- 3) Technical glitches - can't keep up; lacking in infrastructure. - can't fully support cooperator.

Bill Clay touched on the topics of the oral rabies vaccine and the need to get the Regional Director's position filled. This was a big concern for some of the committee members.

Dick Curnow of the National Wildlife Research Center (NWRC) presented a history of NWRC and gave an overview of its past accomplishments and future projects. He stated he was very fortunate to have a research arm in the government. Dick also reconfirmed the statements of Rick Owens, and Mike Worthen. Dick Curnow then introduced Rick Bruggers, Assistant Director of NWRC, to the committee, who then took over and provided further information regarding NWRC.

Rick expressed how unique NWRC is in many ways. It is the only Center that focuses on wildlife services. The program consists of the Western and Eastern Regions, NWRC, Maryland, Washington, DC, and the MIS Center. NWRC's headquarters is situated in Ft. Collins, CO, with various research offices throughout the U.S. Two-thirds of NWRC's offices are located on college campuses. Rick highlighted on the wolf trapping system for livestock and predation protection, improving on trapping monitors, developing of movement-activated frightening systems, cellular phone applications, reproduction/inhibition sterilization (for management of predation), beaver management through cooperative funding and the use of bicarbonates to reduce hatching process of birds' eggs.

Rick stated that NWRC is faced with many challenges, one being a unique research facility and the limited amount of funds that are allocated to the center for its research.

In order to get the advisory committee more involved and keeping them up-to-date, NWRC sent out letters to each committee member asking them to respond to the various needs assessments. This information was compiled and incorporated into a report that was available for distribution.

Next up was Jan Grimes of Planning, Evaluation and Monitoring. She presented to the committee members, the Strategic Plan its priorities of interest. Having completed

interviews with the State Directors regarding their States' needs for the WS Management Team, strategies were developed to address the issues. From that feedback, nine business plans, broken down into four categories, were developed and are in the process of being incorporated. They are:

I. Human Health and Safety:

Airport Safety and Assistance Program: This plan will sketch out the future strategies WS and its cooperators will need to use to ensure the safety of the American traveler from hazards caused by the close proximity of aircraft and wildlife.

Bovine Tuberculosis: This plan will set a course or direction for assisting Veterinary Services (VS) in achieving their goal of eradicating bovine tuberculosis in all domestic herds, by focusing on monitoring and managing TB in free-ranging cervid populations in the United States.

Pseudo Rabies: This plan will also set a course for assisting Veterinary Services (VS) in achieving their goal of eradicating pseudo-rabies in all domestic herds. As in bovine TB, its primary focus is developing strategies for monitoring and managing pseudo-rabies in feral swine populations across the U.S.

Rabies: This plan will focus *primarily* on the expansion of the Oral Rabies Vaccination (ORV) Program for raccoon rabies in the northeastern United States. This plan will provide a more refined and detailed "roadmap" for implementing the Wildlife Rabies Control Strategic Plan.

West Nile Virus: This plan will describe the future role of WS as it plays an important part of managing and monitoring this disease in wild bird populations. It will also provide guidance to the program about how to best handle the expansion of such a surveillance system and how to increase WS' own level of expertise and knowledge around this emerging disease.

II. AGRICULTURE:

Blackbird: This plan will lay out a comprehensive approach for WS involvement in reducing the magnitude of health, safety, nuisance, agricultural, and feedlot problems caused by blackbirds and starlings, on both a local and national level.

Predation Management: This plan will address the evolving needs of farmers, ranchers, private property owners, and natural resource managers as they seek to balance their individual needs with those of predators.

III. INVASIVE SPECIES:

Brown Tree Snake: The Brown Tree Snake business plan will address strategies for much needed expansion in the operational control program, methods development, and increased interdiction efforts.

IV. INFORMATION MANAGEMENT:

Management Information Systems: The growing informational demands of WS will be addressed in this comprehensive business plan, including options for providing increased data flexibility, real-time analysis of WS activities, and more results-based information.

Jan asked the committee members how they would like to be involved. The business plans are intended for the use of discussing measurements and their impact so that Congress and other programs can use them effectively. Member Clait Braun suggested that Jan send to the committee information on the business plans where they can make recommendations and send them back to Jan. Similar processes of interviews were conducted and the committee was very happy on how that process went. They would like to do it again.

Jan briefly touched on three strategic topics (WS Mission, Setting Priorities for and Measuring Impacts of WS Programs) from the last NWSAC meeting that was held in 2000.

Bill Clay gave a review of the NWSAC Charter and discussed the roles, duties and processes for voting for a new Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson. He referred the committee to APHIS Department Regulation 1043-027: **Reestablishment of National Wildlife Services Advisory Committee** - Sections 1, 1b, 2a, 3a, 4, and 5.

Bill Clay asked the members for a motion to elect a Chair and Vice-Chair. By a unanimous vote, Clait Braun was elected as Chair of the NWSAC and John Baucus was elected as Vice-Chair. They were both introduced to the members and audience.

Clait Braun thanked the committee for his nomination. His first call of action was to have the members update their contact information. He then asked each committee member to voice any concerns, recommendations, or issues they want addressed. Recommendations were discussed and compiled. Each member was tasked with taking the recommendations back to their hotels and coming up with some sound and reasonable issues to present in final form.

A motion was made to adjourn for the day. The Committee will reconvene at 8:00 a.m. on Wednesday, June 5, 2002.

Wednesday, June 5, 2002

Discussion of Recommendations

Dr. Braun, the Chairman, advised the group that if group consensus is not achieved, members may ask for a ballot vote on whether a recommendation is passed.

Invasive Species: Dr. Hadidian requested information on the WS nutria control program in Maryland. Mr. Owens provided an overview of the types of damage caused to aquatic vegetation by nutria. The US Fish and Wildlife Service and the Maryland Department of Natural Resources are concerned about the impacts of nutria. The US Fish and Wildlife Service provided ½ million dollars for WS to remove nutria in Maryland. Ms. Liss commented that successful control is questionable.

The committee suggested that research to determine invasive species causing the most damage to resources be initiated. Mr. Worthen suggested a recommendation to the Secretary be worded to encourage addressing invasive species damage in accordance with the Executive Order on Invasive Species. Mr. Clay suggested that wording to protect public health and safety from invasive species damage also be added to the recommendation. A committee member stated that eradication of invasive species is impossible. Mr. Baucus requested that the group provide more clarification on the definition of damage by invasive species. Mr. Clay suggested that MIS information be used to assess and measure damage caused by exotic species.

Recommendation # 10

Vote: Yes 15, No 1 (Kennedy)

Meeting Location: Past committee members recommended that the next NWSAC meeting be held at the NWRC research station at Sandusky, OH or Logan, UT was discussed. New members expressed a preference to meet at Ft. Collins. Ms. Garrett stated that Ft. Collins would be the least expensive location. This would not be a recommendation but should be decided among themselves.

Dr. Braun suggested a 2-hour discussion on a topic of the committees choice be introduced. Mr. Clay suggested a tour of the research facility. Two months before the meeting agenda items will be requested which could include topics for discussion other activities.

Predator Management for Threatened & Endangered Species: The committee suggested that WS conduct predator management for threatened and endangered species. This is already being done. Mr. Owens asked if the committee wants WS to be more proactive in working systematically with the US Fish and Wildlife Service to assess the need for predator management. Currently WS is reactive because they only respond to requests for assistance. Mr. Poulos explained the correct terminology for the US Fish and Wildlife Service listing procedure. At the request of the committee, Mr. Worthen stated that the implementation of this recommendation will stop predator management work for threatened and endangered species in Oregon but not other states. Ms. Kennedy recommended that predator control work for threatened and endangered species only be done with a recommendation from the US Fish and Wildlife Service. Mr. Worthen responded that WS already works under the discretion of the US Fish and Wildlife Service. The US Fish and Wildlife Service is helpful in obtaining funding for threatened and endangered species work. State agencies also provide funding to WS for threatened and endangered species work.

Concerns were expressed that habitat management as well as predator management is considered for sage grouse management. Ms. Kennedy stated that science-based management should be emphasized. The NEPA process and the US Fish and Wildlife Service authorities are management safeguards for the process. At the request of the committee, Mr. Worthen defined predator management as the use of several lethal and non lethal methods. Mr. Owens stated that currently WS responds to requests for threatened and endangered species management reactively. Does the committee want WS to respond proactively?

Recommendation # 9

Vote: Yes 15, abstain 1 (Liss)

Wildlife Borne Diseases: The committee ultimately proposed three recommendations on WS activities related to wildlife borne diseases. Risk assessment was defined by Dr. Hadidian as providing information to the public about disease threats to public safety. Dr. Curnow stated that the recommendations on wildlife borne diseases are timely and would dovetail well with the current plans and the role of the new WS wildlife disease coordinator position located within NWRC. Mr. Mendoza stated that wildlife borne disease control work is currently being conducted in WS operations. The committee commented that although difficult to do, an acceptable level of risk/damage needs to be done.

Recommendation # 15

Vote: Yes (unanimous)

The committee proposed a recommendation that the Secretary define the wildlife borne disease emergency preparedness roles of WS and VS, and that training and funding be expanded. Dr. Curnow suggested the role of the USGS in wildlife disease emergency preparedness also be defined. Ms. Smith suggested that the recommendation be expanded to include intentionally and unintentionally introduced diseases.

Recommendation # 4

Vote: Yes (unanimous)

The committee recommended that the Secretary support the WS business plans.

Recommendation # 14

Vote: Yes (unanimous)

Recommendations for increased funding for WS were provided.

Wolf Management Funding: The committee suggested a recommendation to increase funding for gray wolf management in the west. The management of wolves in the east was included.

Ms. Liss emphasized that wolf management in Minnesota be humane. Others in the group added that methods should also be acceptable to producers and effective. Integrated management methods are already being done but stating it in the recommendation will help

to emphasize the point. Ms. Kennedy suggested that funding be obtained for the USFWS to conduct wolf management.

Recommendation # 18

Vote: Yes 15, No 1 (Liss is opposed to the methods used for wolf management)

Funding to Maintain NWRC: The committee recommended that \$5 million should be provided to maintain the NWRC and field stations. NWRC construction is already funded. NWRC needs to assess the long and short term effects of the humaneness of tools and recommendations provided as to their continued use. Dr. Curnow stated that although it is not always clearly articulated in the reports, humaneness assessment is a part of the current research protocol. The extent of any injury to animals caused by the tools is discussed in the reports. A statement was made that the program needs several options and flexibility in the use of tools. Mr. Worthen stated the goal is to replace tools with new methods if they are just as effective and funds are available for methods' development.

Recommendation # 2

Vote: Yes 16 (unanimous)

Funding to Maintain NEPA Compliance: The committee recommended that funding be provided to hire staff to update EIS's every 5 years. Mr. Worthen suggested that NEPA compliance be conducted on a timely cycle to be more flexible since current funding is lacking for staff to conduct NEPA analysis. A committee member stated that benefit to frequent NEPA updating is that current research data would be included.

Recommendation # 1

Vote: Yes 16 (unanimous)

Funding for Double Crested Cormorant Control: The committee proposed that \$10 million be requested for double crested cormorant control in aquaculture. Ms. Kennedy emphasized her opposition to research proposals that include any lethal control. She also felt that \$10 Million is a lot of money for one project. Mr. Worthen stated that an aquaculture initiative up to \$2 million would be supportable. The recommendation should include the methods recommended in the USFWS Double Crested Cormorant EIS. Mr. Poulos stated that WS proposed a budget of \$2-5 million for 3 years to WS operations and research for monitoring and outreach activities. The USFWS stated that they would obtain this cooperative funding for WS to manage the alternatives in the EIS. The EIS includes developing a new depredation order in 20-30 states. The current depredation order including 13 states would be amended to include the control of cormorant roosts.

Recommendation # 8

Vote: Yes 13, Abstain 3 (Kennedy did not agree with any of the EIS alternatives, Hadidian and Liss)

Need Funding for MIS Upgrading: The committee proposed a recommendation to fully fund MIS 2000 for FY 04 and FY 05.

Recommendation # 17

Vote: Yes 16 (unanimous)

Improved Information Dissemination: The committee proposed establishing a team to ensure information transfer from NWRC to the WS Program. It was pointed out that this is similar to a 1999 recommendation. Dr. Curnow stated that information on tools is currently being disseminated through reports, reading material, fact sheets and workshops. Ms. Kennedy stated that although information is being passed from NWRC, implementation is not guaranteed.

Mr. Owens stated that WS networking systems and personnel exchanges between states encourages new approaches to be used. Ms. Smith stated that an information transfer effectiveness assessment is needed. Mr. Chacon asked how well new information is being transferred to the public. Publications such as the Nebraska Wildlife Damage Management Handbook become outdated quickly.

Ms. Oxarango recommended that WS make an effort to disseminate the information in the GAO report that shows a 27:1 benefit to the livestock industry. The estimated ratio may be high but whatever the ratio is, it shows that the program is effective. The best time to disseminate the information is before funding is discussed. The group decided this was not needed as a separate recommendation.

Recommendation # 3

Vote: Yes 13, Abstain 2 (Kennedy stated that the GAO report quoted her incorrectly.

Hadidian stated that the report used internal WS data not external data. Liss disapproved)

Recognize an Outstanding WS Employee: The committee recommended that recognition be provided for an outstanding employee that uses humane techniques. Mr. Worthen recommended an award for an employee that encourages cooperation. An honor award from the Secretary is already in place. The most recent award was provided to NY WS honoring their work on the Staten Island Landfill Project. The award shouldn't be limited to non lethal methods in order to encourage the development of the most effective tools. Ms. Smith stated that employee recognition is feasible in the current system or a new award system could be created. It was stated that new methods are normally developed by a team and not an individual employee. It was recommended that the award be given to an employee who develops innovative, nonlethal and effective methods. There was no group consensus so a ballot vote was conducted.

Recommendation # 6

Vote: Yes 8, No 8. (A tie fails the recommendation.)

Use of the ADC Decision Model: A recommendation was proposed that the ADC decision model be used as a common practice. It was noted that this is already being done. A member wanted to know if there is a system for evaluating its use. The GAO evaluation stated that the decision model is being used. Group consensus was there is no need for a recommendation.

Convert to Piston-Driven Helicopters: The committee proposed a recommendation to evaluate the safety of piston versus turbine powered helicopters based upon a recent study. Based on the outcome of the evaluation, WS aircraft should be converted. Mr. Worthen stated that this would be a helpful recommendation. It should cite the NTSB study. Ms. Kennedy stated that WS is reluctant to convert to piston driven helicopters because the loss of turbine contracts will increase the costs and reduce the number of aerial hunting flights that are possible.

Recommendation # 5

Vote: Yes (unanimous)

Appoint Eastern Regional Director: It was recommended that the Eastern Regional Directors' appointment be expedited and that the person selected have a background in wildlife management.

Recommendation # 16

Vote: Yes (unanimous)

Enhance WS Outreach Efforts: The committee recommended that WS enhance information dissemination. NWRC already provides ongoing information exchange. Mr. Chacon emphasized a need for information transfer and community outreach to the public and cooperators at the local level so they can implement their own control program. Increasing the technical assistance role of WS may assist in obtaining funding for the program.

Recommendation # 17

Vote: Yes 16 (unanimous)

Development of WS Standard Operating Procedures: The committee recommended that the establishment of standard operating procedures be encouraged. Mr. Dunaway stated that WS has several manuals describing standard operating procedures. These include procedures for work on airports and with firearms, pesticides and immobilizing and euthanasia substances. Ms. Kennedy wants national consistency especially as it relates to wildlife capture and handling and other field operations. Ms. Smith pointed out that WS has standard protocols and is continuing to establish more as needed.

Recommendation # 12

Vote: Yes (unanimous)

Control of Territorial Breeding Coyotes: The committee proposed a recommendation stating that based on the data that territorial dominant coyotes are the principle livestock killer, control of breeding populations should be implemented when possible. Ms. Kennedy stated that removal programs should focus on breeding territorial coyotes. Mr. Worthen added that the focus should be on the dominant coyote pair in the spring when calves are born. Dr. Curnow stated research that sterilization of the dominant pair will reduce killing of livestock to feed pups and should be implemented if funding allows.

Recommendation # 11

Vote: Yes 15, No 1 (Hadidian wants only selective control implemented)

Continually Updating Predator Management Techniques: The committee proposed a recommendation to consider the impacts of new predator management techniques on target and nontarget species. This is an ongoing action.

Recommendation # 13

Vote: Yes (unanimous)